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# A Nazi war criminal with a high US connection

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Walter Rauff, the Nazi war criminal, died this month in South America, but the controversy over his escape from justice continues.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles for the Documentation of Nazi War Crimes recently alleged that Rauff escaped from an allied concentration camp in Italy, and was smuggled to South America by the Vatican. A French history of the postwar period accuses Rauff of supervising the smuggling of 5000 Nazis out of the port of Genoa during the same period.

How could a man who coordinated the SS use of mobile gas vans used to kill thousands of Jews be allowed to operate such an enormous evacuation system under the noses of allied intelligence in Italy? Why would the Vatican protect such a man?

Recently declassified American intelligence documents provide a cold-blooded explanation. Rauff was told to use the Vatican as a cover for an illegal Nazi recruitment program under the direction of Allen Dulles. Rauff was working for the American branch chief of the Office of Strategic Services even before the war was over. It was Allen Dulles, the future head of State Department covert intelligence, and later the CIA, who freed Rauff from allied custody. Rauff knew all along who his true patron was.

To the astonishment of US Army Counter-Intelligence Corps agents, Walter Rauff, the SS intelligence chief for northwestern Italy, calmly turned himself into the allies on April 27, 1945. Rauff was on the CIC automatic arrest list, not only because of his involvement with the gas vans, but also because he had tortured and murdered allied agents and partisans in Italy.

Rauff knew he had nothing to fear. He told Army CIC that he had made "arrangements" for his surrender "in order to avoid further bloodshed in Milan." According to the secret CIC report of May 1, 1945, Rauff stated that the arrangements could be confirmed "by Hussman and Mr. Dulles, allied agents in Switzerland." Rauff then told the CIC that he would not give them any more information.

From May 1 to May 25, 1945, Rauff was debriefed in a military interrogation center. Rauff's statement was classified as top secret, a designation usually reserved only for allied agents'

reports of very sensitive operations.

The interrogator described Rauff as a "typical member of the SD hierarchy [secret service division of the SS] who has brought his organization of political gangsterism to streamlined perfection and is proud of the fact. By nature cynical and overbearing ... his contempt and everlasting malice toward the Allies are but slightly concealed."

Rauff had reason to be contemptuous of the US military; he had higher connections. In paragraph 5 (g) of his voluminous statement, Rauff played his ace. Rauff had been the go-between in negotiating the secret surrender of the SS armies in Italy. He described his contacts in Switzerland as "Professor Hussman and Major Weibel of the Swiss Intelligence Service."

There is a picture of Hussman and Weibel in Leonard Mosley's history of the Dulles family. They were the negotiators for Allen Dulles in Operation Sunrise. Dulles himself recounted how in late February and early March of 1945, his aides negotiated with two SS officers, Zimmer and "Col. Eugen Dollmann."

It is clear from the dates and times that Dulles lied in his memoirs on one point: The SS colonel was Walter Rauff, not "Dollman," as Rauff's top-secret file confirms. Rauff was the colonel who went to Lugano in March 1945, to arrange the release of allied prisoners in Rauff's custody as a sign of good faith.

In return for the surrender of all SS forces, Dulles promised that none of the negotiators would ever be prosecuted as war criminals.

When Truman and Stalin discovered what Dulles had done, there were outraged orders to call off Sunrise, but Dulles went ahead anyway, with Truman's reluctant concurrence, on April 27 - the day that Rauff turned himself in. Despite the Army interrogators' pleas that Rauff "is considered a menace if ever set free, and failing actual elimination, is recommended for life-long internment," Dulles kept his bargain and Rauff was released.

According to usually reliable intelligence sources, Dulles then employed Rauff on anti-Communist operations in Italy, which was Rauff's specialty under the Nazis. Dulles asked the Vatican to continue his wartime arrangement of using Catholic monasteries and convents to hide OSS agents.

After the war, Dulles explained, these safe houses were still needed to smuggle out anti-Communist refugees. The Vatican's involvement with Dulles's program was minimal. The church provided food, shelter, and identity cards, as it did to all refugees. It was Dulles's contacts, not the Vatican, who handled the smuggling of Nazis.

According to top secret State Department documents, the Italian police pro-

vided the false passports for allied agents; the visas came from the Argentine consulate in the allied intelligence unit based at Trieste; and the embarkation paperwork was handled by a US State Department officer in Genoa. Genoa, incidentally, was Rauff's area of jurisdiction.

All of them worked for Dulles, who set up the unwitting Vatican to be the scapegoat if it were ever discovered that Dulles's anti-Communist refugees were really SS intelligence agents. To be sure, there were a few priests, and even one bishop, who smuggled a few of their own Nazi countrymen through Italy, but that was at extremely low levels of the Vatican, and was quietly squelched after the exposure in the Italian press in 1948.

The higher-level connection between the Vatican and Dulles is still classified by the government.

John Loftus, a lawyer in Rockland, resigned from the Justice Department to write "The Belarus Secret" on the government's coverup of Nazi smuggling.